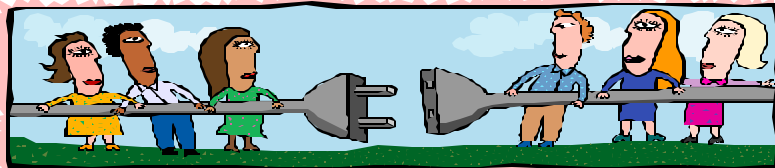


Consumer Connection



Informed Consumers, Quality Utility Services, and a Dedicated Organization for Missourians in the 21st Century

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Public Information & Education Department

The Cold Weather Rule

From November 1st through March 31st, the PSC's Cold Weather Rule is in effect. What does this mean to you?

1. Prohibits disconnection of heat-related service when the temperature is forecasted to drop below 32 degrees.
2. Allows you to budget your payments over 12 months.
3. Allows you to extend payment of pre-existing arrears beyond 12 months.
4. Does not require a deposit if payment agreement is kept.
5. Requires that you be notified by mail, with one notification attempt in person, before your service is shut off.
6. Allows you to register with the utility if:
 - a. sixty-five (65) years of age or older;
 - b. disabled to the extent that you have filed with the utility a medical form submitted by a medical physician attesting that your household must have natural gas or electric utility service provided in the home to maintain life or health; or
 - c. you have obtained a formal award letter issued from the federal government of disability benefits.
7. Prohibits disconnection of **registered** low-income elderly or disabled customers who make a minimum payment.
8. Requires that you be notified of possible financial help in paying your bill.
9. Allows reconnection of your service for less than the full amount owed.

For a complete copy of the Cold Weather Rule, please contact us at **1-800-392-4211**.

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP is a federally-funded program to help low-income households meet their home heating and/or cooling needs.

The availability of LIHEAP assistance is not guaranteed. Applications are accepted in Community Action Agency offices throughout Missouri starting in **October**. Funds are limited. When applying for LIHEAP funds, you may need the following items:

- Recent copies of your utility bills.
- A recent payroll stub or other proof that shows your current gross income.
- Documentation showing income from Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, Pension Funds, Disability, etc.
- Final Utility Termination Notice (if you've received a shut-off notice from your energy company).
- Proof of present address (e.g. rent receipt, lease or deed, property tax bill).
- Proof of total members living in your household (e.g., birth certificates, school records, etc.). Social Security cards (or numbers) for all persons living in your household.
- Proof of U.S. citizenship or permanent residence.

There are 19 Missouri Community Action Agencies located throughout the state. Each agency has specific service regions.

To find an agency that represents your county, please call **573-634-2926** or visit www.communityaction.org/CAAServiceAreas.htm



What is Budget Billing?

Essentially, budget billing is an "optional" payment program that allows you to pay the same amount each month for your electricity or natural gas usage throughout the entire year. This monthly bill is typically based upon your usage the previous 12 months. **The types of budget billing plans administered by each company may vary. Contact your local utility provider for details.**

What are the advantages of budget billing?

Budget billing gives you more certainty about what your electric or natural gas bill will be each month. Instead of paying high natural gas bills in the winter or high electric bills in the summer, you pay relatively the same amount all year. In low usage months, you will pay more than your actual bill. Likewise, when usage is high, your budget bill amount will be lower than your actual bill.

How is the budget bill amount calculated?

Your energy company estimates your payment based on your previous year's consumption.

What factors can cause a change in my payment?

Weather. Warmer or colder than normal temperatures will impact the amount of electricity or natural gas you use. If you improve the energy efficiency of your home, your usage will be lower than expected. For example, you can improve home energy efficiency when you replace an old air conditioner, insulate your attic or seal air leaks. A change in the cost of electricity or natural gas or your monthly usage can also affect your payment.

Can my budget billing amount be adjusted during the year?

Yes. Your budget billing payment is reviewed periodically by your utility provider to avoid significant overpayment or underpayment. Your actual usage and rates, compared to the utility's estimated budget amount, may cause your budget plan payment to go up or down.

How do I sign up for budget billing?

Contact your utility provider for information to see what type of plans they offer. In most cases, the only requirement is that you pay your bill on time. Customers may choose to leave "budget billing" at any time.



IF YOU SMELL NATURAL GAS

BE CAREFUL

- Evacuate the building immediately.
- Do not operate electrical switches.
- Do not smoke, use lighters, matches or any other open flame.
- Do not start your vehicle if it is in an attached garage.

OTHER TIPS

Go to a neighbor's house and call your local natural gas company to report the odor and its approximate location.

Do not call from inside your house. Calling from a phone inside your home could create a spark that could cause an explosion.

If your service is disrupted for any reason, please make sure that a trained professional relights your pilot flames.

THE ODOR

Natural gas itself does not have an odor -- an odorant has been added so gas can be detected if a leak occurs. The odor is similar to the smell of "rotten eggs."

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For printed materials regarding a number of consumer issues or copies of this newsletter, please call 573-751-7491 or email joyce.neuner@psc.mo.gov

Who to Contact:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Hotline **1-800-392-4211**
or email: pscinfo@psc.mo.gov



Mail your inquiry or complaint to:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Services Department
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0360